



Rev Robert Orr Freeman

November 16, 1925 - March 23, 2022

The Reverend Robert Orr Freeman of Salisbury, NC died on March 23, 2022 at the age of 96. He was born on November 16, 1925 in Memphis, TN the first son of Frances Orr and Rev. Daniel Ralph Freeman. He was born into a clergy family with a love of God and music where he learned to play the cornet as a boy, fashioning his life's course. He grew up in Pulaski County, VA, graduated from the small Draper High School in 1941 and then pursued college preparatory education at Fork Union Military Academy. He entered Davidson College in 1942, but his education was interrupted by service of 18 months in the US Navy as an Aviation Cadet from February 1944 to October 1945 preparing for the potential invasion of Japan near the end of the Second World War. He returned to Davidson after his discharge to graduate with a degree in music in 1947. He moved to live with his aunt in Houston, TX where he attended Austin Presbyterian Seminary and served as an associate at the Highland Presbyterian Church. It was in Houston that he met his future wife, Mary Jane Tipton, who was pursuing her master's degree in voice at the University of Houston. He married Jane on December 30, 1954 and they had two children: Elizabeth Jane and Robert Bruce. They were married for over 54 years, celebrating their 50th anniversary in Salisbury in 2004.

He had a lengthy and varied career as a Presbyterian minister, serving 56 years. After graduation from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA in 1957, he was ordained and served four pastorates in the Fayetteville, NC

area: Ashpole, Philippi, Hope Mills and Westminster Presbyterian Churches from 1957 to 1971. He then moved to Charlotte, NC called to serve Commonwealth Eastminster Presbyterian Church, which later merged with Albemarle Road Presbyterian Church from 1971 to 1974. He then served as full time interim or supply pastor for numerous churches in NC, TN, and VA from 1974 to 1987. He came to Salisbury in 1987 called to be pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church from 1987 to 1992, retiring on December 31, 1992. He also served as choir director in many of the churches he pastored. After retirement he continued to pastor the community supporting part-time interim and stated supply of pastorates in Salem Presbytery, including Royal Oaks, Bethel, and Cleveland Presbyterian Churches and as a Parish Associate at Thyatira Presbyterian Church until 2013.

He continued to follow his life-long passion of liturgical and classical music, participating in many choral groups in the communities where he and his wife lived. They sang in so many choral groups over the years it would be virtually impossible to list them all. In Salisbury they were active in the Salisbury Concert Choir, Ecumenical Choir, and church choirs among others. Indeed, they were very grateful to God for giving them their ability to sing God's praises for their entire lives. He was active in the Optimist International service clubs throughout his life, serving in clubs in Charlotte and Salisbury as president and ultimately as governor of the Western North Carolina region. He was awarded the Salisbury Community Development Corporation Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Humanitarian Award in 1998 in recognition of his many years of service to the community up to that time.

He was not only active in the Presbyterian Church USA, but also very active ecumenically representing the Mecklenburg and Salem Presbyteries in the World Council of Churches, North Carolina Council of Churches, Charlotte Area Clergy Association among many other international, national and local religious groups. He helped organize the May 1975 Mecklenburg Declaration

of Independence bi-centennial celebration giving the invocation for those attending, including President Gerald Ford. While in Salisbury he was always active with Rowan Helping Ministries and other local ministerial associations as he thought it important to know and work with fellow ministers and community leaders.

He was always loyal to his alma mater, Davidson College, supporting the college in many ways over more than 60 years, not least of which being a men's basketball season ticket holder for many years on and off from 1973 until 2019. He was also dedicated to the Democratic Party actively supporting policies that further democratic values and specifically helping form the North Carolina Senior Democrats group to support Democratic candidates.

He is predeceased by his wife Jane, brother, David, and his sister, Edith. He is survived by his children: Elizabeth Jane and Robert Bruce; grandchildren: Bryan, Christopher, John, and Matthew; and great-grandchildren: Echo, Jacy, and Jaxson.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Rowan Helping Ministries, or the Optimist International. Memorial service on Saturday, April 30th at 2:00pm at Thyatira Presbyterian Church and the interment on Sunday, May 1st at Steele Creek Historic Cemetery in a small service at a time TBD.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR **30**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Thyatira Presbyterian Church
220 White Road
Salisbury, NC 28147

Tribute Wall



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev Robert Orr Freeman.* ”



April 24, 2022 at 12:19 PM

KP

“ Beautiful obituary. He touched so many life's.
I loved his sense of humor!!
Our first meeting was at Mrs. Blackwell's memorial service., as we talked, he allowed me to pick his mind about different religions, "back in the day" food, etc....
He made me laugh 😂 as between questions he'd like for me to get him another brownie, cookie, drink, what have you 💕 🤗💕 I would go get us another "set up" & we would continue our in depth conversation! Such a knowledgeable, sweet, funny soul.
Knowing his love for sweets, brownies in particular, (he told me just how he liked them made, texture & flavor wise... oh & nuts!) I sent him a package via mail. He looked for those brownies for a week before asking the office if they had any mail or delivery for him. Behold!!! Brownies were found & he apparently loved them very much💕
He would call, yet couldn't hear me very well on the phone, it was hard for him to write... the phone was best for him.
He had the sweetest soul, one I'll never forget, his welcome home in our heavenly Kingdom must be a sight to behold with lots of Sweets, Laughs, Smiles & Love!
Thank you Mr. Bob for setting me straight on the difference between a Baptist & a Presbyterian, "One is sprinkled, the other is dunked"
💕💕💕💕 Much Love always 💕
My sincere condolences to my LizzyBeth, Echo, Jacy, & to the Family as a whole. 🦋🦋🦋

Kathryn Posey - April 24, 2022 at 11:51 AM

DL

“ I just learned of Mr. Freeman's passing. I'm so sorry for your loss. He was such a nice man and would pick me up from work and take me to the Salisbury Noon Optimist Club meetings back in the mid to late 90s. He loved the that organization and worked very hard with it.

Debbie Loflin-Benge - April 07, 2022 at 02:28 PM